

# Wisconsin Legislative Council

## Wisconsin Legislator Briefing Book 2009-10

- R-1 Introduction
- R-3 Rules of the Road
- R-4 Licensing of Drivers
- R-7 Vehicles
- R-10 Highways
- R-11 Transit
- R-11 Other Modes of Transportation
- R-12 Additional References

By:  
Larry Konopacki  
Staff Attorney

## Chapter R

### Transportation

The state plays a large role in the provision and administration of transportation in Wisconsin. The focus of this chapter is on motor vehicle transportation on highways. Included are a summary of the state's motor vehicle statutes and related Wisconsin Administrative Code provisions, a description of the framework of the Department of Transportation (DOT), examples of the "rules of the road" for motor vehicles, information on vehicle and driver requirements, and a summary of the state's highway system. The chapter also briefly discusses transit services and other modes of transportation in the state and lists some additional transportation resources.

### Introduction

Wisconsin's motor vehicle laws are primarily contained in chapters 340 to 349 and 351 of the Wisconsin Statutes (the motor vehicle code) and the DOT rules in the Wisconsin Administrative Code that interpret and administer these statutes.

The following is a list of where key statutory provisions in the motor vehicle code may be found. More detail is provided on many of these provisions in subsequent sections of this chapter:

**Definitions.** Most of the defined terms used in the motor vehicle code are contained in ch. 340, Stats.

**Registration of Vehicles.** Chapter 341, Stats., contains the statutes related to registration of vehicles and vehicle license plates.

**Vehicle Title.** Chapter 342, Stats., includes statutes specifying how vehicles are titled and transferred in this state.

**Driver's License.** Chapter 343, Stats., provides for the administration of the state's driver licensing system, including general driver's licenses, graduated and probationary licenses, commercial licenses, and occupational licenses.

**Traffic Tickets.** Chapter 345, Stats., contains statutes that control the issuance, form, and processing of traffic citations.

**“Rules of the Road.”** Chapter 346, Stats., lists most of the traffic rules that govern the operation of vehicles on highways, including provisions relating to traffic signs and signals, parking requirements, speed restrictions, drunk driving, pedestrians, and bicycles.

**Vehicle Equipment.** Chapter 347, Stats., contains requirements for equipment that vehicles must have and the use of such equipment. This includes lighting, brakes, horns, mufflers, mirrors, and safety glass.

**Vehicle Weight Limits and Size Limits.** Chapter 348, Stats., lists rules controlling the size, load, and weight restrictions for vehicles, which can depend on axle number and configurations, type of highway traveled, time of year of travel, and type of load the vehicle may be carrying.

**Traffic Law Authority of Local Governments.** Chapter 349, Stats., provides local units of government with limited authority to control and enforce traffic law, including the authority to adopt traffic regulations, place signs, control traffic movement, set speed limits, regulate parking, use parking meters, set weight limits, and authorize use of neighborhood electric vehicles. The chapter also requires the motor vehicle code to be uniform across the state, and most local traffic regulations to be “in strict conformity” with state law.

Electronic access to these Wisconsin Statutes is available at:

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/stats.html>.

**Administrative Rules.** The DOT administrative rules that interpret and administer the motor vehicle code are chs. Trans 1 through 515. For more information about Wisconsin’s administrative rules process, see the chapter of this Briefing Book titled “Review of Administrative Rules” in Part I. Electronic access to the Administrative Code is available at: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code.htm>.

## Department of Transportation

**Wisconsin DOT.** The Wisconsin DOT is responsible for the planning, promotion, and protection of the transportation systems in the state. Its major responsibilities involve highways, motor vehicles, motor carriers, traffic law enforcement, railroads, bicycle and pedestrian, waterways, mass transit, and aeronautics.

DOT works with several federal agencies in the administration of federal transportation aids and all local governments in the administration of local aids. DOT also cooperates with departments at the state level in travel promotion, consumer protection, environmental analysis, and transportation services for elderly and handicapped persons.

DOT is organized into three executive offices (Public Affairs; Policy, Budget, and Finance; and General Counsel) and the following five divisions:

- Division of Transportation System Development.
- Division of Transportation Investment Management.
- Division of Business Management.
- Division of Motor Vehicles.
- Division of State Patrol.

More detailed information on the divisions and information for programs offered is available at: [www.dot.wisconsin.gov/](http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/).

## Rules of the Road

Many of the laws that govern the operation of various types of vehicles on public highways can be found in ch. 346, Stats. These traffic laws include provisions requiring vehicle operators to obey traffic control officers and traffic control signs and signals, the rules establishing rights-of-way of vehicles in various situations, speed limits, rules governing emergency vehicles, pedestrian responsibilities, parking requirements, reckless driving rules, and special rules related to bicycles and Seg-way scooters (defined as “electric personal assistive mobility devices”). Chapter 346 also contains more obscure rules, such as what to do when passing or meeting a frightened animal, the right-of-way of livestock on a highway, a prohibition on crossing a fire hose, and the rules governing transporting buildings on highways.

### Traffic Tickets

Law enforcement agencies in the state have been issuing “uniform traffic citations” for moving traffic violations for decades. To provide additional uniformity for traffic citations, the Wisconsin Judicial Conference sets “deposit” amounts for traffic offenses, many of which have a range of statutory penalties. This deposit amount is the total dollar amount that a law enforcement officer writes on a traffic citation after adding statutory fees and other costs.

As an example, the statutory penalty for speeding in excess of a 65-mile per hour (MPH) speed limit is from \$50 to \$300. The Judicial Conference has set a range of deposit amounts for violations of this offense, the amount of which depends on how fast a person was driving. For instance, the deposit amount for a citation issued to a person who was traveling 76-80 MPH in a 65 MPH zone would be \$50 and the deposit amount for a person traveling 100 MPH or faster in the same zone would be \$300.

Each citation amount, regardless of the jurisdiction that issued the citation, includes a penalty surcharge (26% of the deposit amount) and a jail surcharge/crime lab drug surcharge (\$18). Citations to be processed in county circuit court also include a justice information system surcharge/court support services surcharge (\$80) and circuit court costs (\$25). Citations to be processed in municipal court do not include the justice information system surcharge/court support services surcharge but do include court costs which the jurisdiction can set from \$15 to \$28 per citation.

Therefore, the dollar amount written on a citation for the 76-80 MPH violation example would be \$186 if the citation was to be processed in circuit court and \$109 if the citation was to be processed by a municipal court that collects the maximum court costs allowed. The dollar amount on the citation for the 100 MPH or faster violation example would be \$501 for circuit court or \$424 for municipal court.

The Judicial Conference publishes a comprehensive bond schedule which outlines the penalty ranges, deposit amounts, fees, and costs for moving violations, and is available online at:

<http://www.wicourts.gov/about/pubs/supreme/docs/bondsched08.pdf>. To see how the citation amount was calculated for the speeding examples above, see page 42 and the final page of this bond schedule.

### Demerit Points

In addition to monetary penalties, demerit points are assessed against a person's driving record when the person is convicted of a moving traffic violation. When 12 or more demerit points are accumulated by a driver in one year, the driver's license is suspended for a minimum of two months. Demerit points are doubled for traffic violations committed by a person with a probationary license who has had more than one traffic violation.

The total demerit points assessed to a driver may be reduced in certain ways including by taking an approved traffic safety course. The demerit points for particular offenses are listed in the Judicial Council's bond schedule (see above). For the two speeding examples discussed above, the demerit points are four and six points, respectively.

### Habitual Traffic Offenders

Drivers who accumulate four or more "major" traffic offense convictions or a combination of 12 minor and major convictions in a five-year period are considered "habitual traffic offenders." Major offenses include OWI, eluding an officer, and reckless driving. The driver's license of a habitual traffic offender is revoked for 5 years.

### Wisconsin's Drunk Driving Laws (OWI)

In Wisconsin, it is illegal to operate a motor vehicle while under the influence of an intoxicant, a controlled substance, any other drug which renders a driver incapable of safely driving, or any combination of these (OWI). This prohibition is found in s. 346.63, Stats., and subsequent sections. OWI and OWI-related offenses can be found on page 44 of the Judicial Conference's bond schedule discussed above.

The prohibited blood alcohol concentration (BAC) for operators of vehicles in Wisconsin is 0.08%. Penalties for OWI and OWI-related laws include driving privilege sanctions, monetary penalties, imprisonment, vehicle seizure or immobilization, and required ignition interlock device installation. The severity of penalties depends on how many OWI-related offenses the person has committed, the harm caused during intoxicated operation, and other penalty enhancers. First offense OWI is a civil forfeiture offense (money forfeiture) and not a crime (fine, imprisonment, or both).

### Implied Consent

Under Wisconsin's "implied consent" law, a person who operates a motor vehicle upon a public highway in this state is generally deemed to have consented to submit to a chemical test to determine his or her BAC. A person who refuses to submit to a chemical test is subject to strict penalties such as the loss of driving privileges for one year, and the person may still be prosecuted for the related OWI violation. Refusal to submit to a chemical test is included when calculating the number of prior OWI violations for the purpose of determining the OWI offense to be charged for a subsequent violation.

For penalty information for specific OWI offenses and for refusal of a chemical test, see the following:

<http://www.dot.state.wi.us/safety/motorist/drunkdriving/offenses.htm>.

**Notes:** OWI laws for snowmobile operators are in s. 350.101, Stats., and subsequent sections. OWI laws for all-terrain vehicle (ATV) operators are in s. 23.33 (4c), Stats.

Convictions for traffic law violations generally remain on a person's driving record for five years from the date of conviction. However, alcohol-related violations and some commercial violations remain on the record for 10 years to life.

## Licensing of Drivers

### Licensing of Drivers in General

To obtain a "regular" Wisconsin driver's license a person must generally be at least 16 years old, provide documentation of the person's identity and legal presence in this state, and must provide other information. The person also must pass knowledge, vision, and skills tests. DOT may require particular drivers to undergo medical or other special examinations. The regular license authorizes the operation of "Class D" vehicles. A driver's license must generally be renewed every eight years.

**Note:** There are exceptions to the general requirement that a driver be licensed to operate a motor vehicle on public highways, including armed services personnel operating federal government vehicles, and drivers operating farm equipment for certain purposes.

If a driver's license has been suspended or revoked, the following DOT webpage may be used to determine eligibility for reinstatement:

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/drivers/eligibility.htm>.

### Instruction Permit

A person is generally eligible to receive an instruction permit if the person is 15-1/2 years of age or older and passes a knowledge test. A driver operating a vehicle under an instruction permit must obey restrictions on who may and who must accompany the driver. (See below for additional requirements for younger drivers under Wisconsin's graduated driver licensing laws.)

An instruction permit for the operation of Class D vehicles is generally valid for one year. Instruction permits for motorcycle operation (Class M vehicle) and commercial vehicle operation (Classes A, B, or C) are also available and may have different age limits and be valid for different lengths of time than Class D instruction permits.

### Probationary License

Most new driver's license holders are issued a probationary license. Demerit points double for traffic violations committed by a person with a probationary license. Probationary licenses generally expire two years from the date of the driver's next birthday.

### Graduated Driver Licensing Requirements

Wisconsin has special graduated driver licensing (GDL) requirements for persons between 15-1/2 and 18 years old, including the following:

**Instruction Permit.** In addition to the general requirements for drivers with instruction permits identified above, drivers under the age of 18 must be enrolled in or have completed an approved driver education course to receive an instruction permit. These drivers must also follow additional restrictions on who may accompany the driver.

**Probationary License for Drivers Under 18.** In addition to the general requirements for probationary licenses described above, drivers under the age of 18 must have held an instruction permit for at least six months and may not commit a moving violation during the six months prior to receiving a probationary license. The driver must have completed at least 30 hours of behind-the-wheel training, must have completed an approved driver education course, and must be enrolled in a school program or have completed high school. Applications for any license by a person under age 18 must be signed by a parent, guardian, or an adult sponsor.

During the first nine months following issuance of a probationary Class D license, or until the driver turns 18 years old, the driver must meet certain restrictions on who may accompany the driver (generally not to exceed more than one non-family member) in a vehicle and what times of day the driver may operate a vehicle for various purposes. These restrictions are extended for six months (but not past the driver's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday) if during this initial nine-month period or a prior extension of this period the driver is convicted for a moving violation, has his or her probationary license suspended or revoked, or otherwise violates the terms of these restrictions.

For more information about GDL requirements, see the DOT website at: <http://www.dot.state.wi.us/drivers/drivers/gdl/index.htm>.

## Commercial Driver's Licenses

Commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) are required in Wisconsin to operate vehicles that weigh over 26,000 pounds, carry certain hazardous materials, or are designed or used to carry 16 or more persons including the driver. Special federal and state regulations govern the operation of commercial motor vehicles. To receive a CDL, a driver must pass a knowledge test and driving skills test in the type of vehicle they drive. Additional testing requirements are required for certain types of vehicles. Strict rules apply to CDL holders related to alcohol and serious traffic violations.

A driver is not eligible to obtain a CDL until age 18 for travel within the state and must be age 21 for an unrestricted CDL. Drivers are not required to have a CDL to operate certain commercial vehicles in certain situations, such as operation by fire fighters and farmers, and operation of recreational vehicles.

For more information about CDLs, see the DOT website at:

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/drivers/apply/types/commercial.htm>.

## Occupational License

A person whose driving privileges are suspended or revoked may be eligible for a restricted driver's license called an "occupational license." An occupational license limits where and when you can drive. An occupational license holder may only drive to and from work, church, school, or other places indicated on the license, during specific times of the day. An occupational license may not be used for recreational purposes and the total driving time is limited to 12 hours each day and no more than 60 hours per week. Occupational licenses cannot be issued for the operation of commercial vehicles.

A driver's eligibility for an occupational license depends on the reason that the driver's license was revoked or suspended. For instance, a person who loses driving privileges because of an OWI (first conviction) is immediately eligible to apply for an occupational license, but a person whose license is revoked under the habitual traffic offender law is not eligible to apply for an occupational license until after a two-year waiting period.

A person can check his or her eligibility for an occupational license at the DOT's website at: <https://trust.dot.state.wi.us/occsin/occsinservlet?whoami=occspl>.

## Federal Real Identification Act

In 2005, Congress passed legislation regulating the issuance of driver's licenses and identification (ID) cards by state motor vehicle authorities, called the "Real ID" act. This law requires a person to have a Real ID-compliant driver's license or ID card for certain "federal purposes" such as boarding a commercial airplane or entering a federal building. States that choose not to comply with the Real ID act need not take action, but driver's licenses and ID cards issued by states that do not comply will no longer be recognized for federal purposes beginning in 2010. DOT's Division of Motor Vehicles is currently in the process of implementing the Real ID act requirements in Wisconsin.

To be Real ID-compliant, a state's driver's license and ID card program must meet the following requirements:

- All applicants must provide either a birth certificate or passport no matter how long they have possessed a driver's license or ID card. Legal residents who are not U.S. citizens must provide additional documentation.
- Applicants must provide evidence of their principle address and their identity.
- All documents must be validated through electronic databases including birth certificates, passports, Social Security numbers, legal residency status, and out-



of-state driver's license or ID card status. Most verification systems do not yet exist, so verification will be phased in as systems become available.

- The state is required to scan and store all source documents for 10 years.
- Before December 2014, a Real ID compliant driver's license or ID card must be issued to all people born after December 1964. The remaining driver's licenses and ID cards must be compliant by December 2017. (DOT estimates that this will require nearly one million Wisconsin residents to renew their driver's licenses and ID cards prior to the current expiration dates.)

The federal Department of Homeland Security has yet to issue final guidance in several key areas of the Real ID implementation rules, and states have raised a number of concerns related to cost, systems and equipment requirements, and other issues. Therefore, there may be further changes to the federal implementation plan for Real ID.

According to DOT, national estimates of the cost to states for implementing Real ID will be approximately \$20 billion (approximately \$80 million in federal grants have been made available thus far). To pay for costs associated with REAL ID, Wisconsin has begun collecting a \$10 federal security verification fee on each driver's license and ID card issued in Wisconsin.

For more information about driver's licenses and ID cards, please see the DOT's website at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/>.

## Vehicles

### Vehicle Registration and License Plates

A person must apply for a certificate of title for most vehicles upon taking ownership of a vehicle, regardless of whether the vehicle will be immediately operated on public highways. In addition, if the person intends to operate the vehicle on public highways, the vehicle must be registered and license plates must be displayed on both the front and rear of most vehicles (temporary license plates may be required in some situations). An applicant may be allowed to transfer license plates between certain vehicles.

The registration for most vehicles must be renewed every year. DOT sends the vehicle owner notice of the date by which a vehicle's registration must be renewed. This notice will list any unpaid parking violations (including applicable towing and storage charges) and other unpaid judgments against the registrant. The vehicle may not be registered until these are addressed. The general initial and yearly registration fee for passenger cars and light trucks is currently \$75.

If a vehicle is purchased from a licensed dealer in Wisconsin, the dealer will generally process the title and registration application with the vehicle owner. If a vehicle is purchased privately, the purchaser is responsible for applying to DOT for a certificate of title and registration of the vehicle. The seller must provide the buyer with an original, assigned title to the vehicle. To assign the title, the seller must complete the odometer disclosure and provide any other required information for assignment on the back of the title, and provide the buyer with a lien release for each lien listed on the title. Most importantly, the title must be signed by the seller(s).

**“Vanity” and  
Special  
License  
Plates**

Upon application for initial registration or registration renewal, an applicant may opt to receive license plates with a personalized registration number. This “number” can be letters or numbers or a combination of the two, up to a total of seven characters or spaces for regular vehicles, and may not duplicate a license plate number for another Wisconsin vehicle. An applicant may also choose from a list of special license plates offered by DOT, including license plates for vehicle collectors, antique vehicles, military service, and other special license plates. The applicant for some special license plates must meet certain eligibility requirements. Some special license plates serve as a fundraising mechanism for certain organizations, including “Golf Wisconsin,” “Ducks Unlimited,” and “Green Bay Packers” plates. All personalized license plates and most special license plates require the payment of additional fees.

Certain vehicles are exempt from the registration requirements, including some farm equipment, snowmobiles, Segway scooters, bicycles, and even amphibious vehicles like the Wisconsin Ducks used in the Wisconsin Dells area. There is a separate registration system administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for ATVs. DOT is prohibited from registering certain vehicles such as vehicles originally made for off-highway operation, making these vehicles illegal to operate on public highways.

For more information about applying for vehicle title and registration, see the DOT’s website at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/vehicles/index.htm>.

**Disabled  
Parking  
License  
Plates and  
Placards**

A vehicle lawfully displaying disabled license plates, disabled veteran license plates, or a disabled placard, and operated by the disabled person or another qualified operator for the use of the disabled person, may exercise certain parking privileges. Such privileges include an exemption from ordinances of general application imposing time limitations of 1/2 hour or more and an exemption from parking meter payment requirements for parking spots with such time limitations (ordinances with specific time limits for disabled parking may be applicable). The vehicle may also be parked in marked disabled parking spots reserved for this purpose.

Disabled license plates are available to state residents who submit a statement from one of a list of certain health care professionals every four years certifying that the person has a disability that limits or impairs his or her ability to walk. These plates are also available to licensed drivers on whom a disabled person is regularly dependent for transportation and to employers that provide a vehicle for a disabled employee.

Disabled veteran license plates are available to veterans who submit a statement from the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) every four years certifying that the veteran has a disability that limits or impairs his or her ability to walk because of injuries sustained while in the active U.S. military service. Disabled veteran license plates and the renewal of such plates are free.

Up to two disabled placards are available to people eligible for disabled license plates or disabled veteran license plates (placards for temporary disability are also available). Placards for non-temporary disabilities are valid for four years. While a disabled placard is in use, the disabled person is required to show the statement verifying the person’s disability provided by the health professional or DVA to a traffic officer upon request.

For more information about disabled parking, see the DOT website at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/vehicles/disabled/>.



**Vehicle  
Equipment  
Standards**

Chapter 347, Stats., and ch. Trans. 305, Wis. Adm. Code, proscribe numerous equipment standards for motor vehicles related to vehicle identification numbers, various types of vehicle lights (head lights, turn signals, tail lights, and brake lights), mirrors, safety glass, brakes, bumpers, horns, seat belts, and odometers. Additional equipment standards also apply to heavy trucks, trailers, and semi-trailers. These chapters also set requirements for how and when certain equipment is to be used, including the requirement that headlights and certain other lights be illuminated during the “hours of darkness.”

**Vehicle Size  
and Weight  
Limits**

Wisconsin has laws controlling the size, load, and weight restrictions for vehicles. A permit is typically required if vehicle dimensions (plus the load on the vehicle) exceed 8-1/2 feet wide, 13-1/2 feet tall, or 40 to 75 feet long depending on the vehicle configuration. Loads also cannot extend beyond the fender line on the left side of the vehicle, more than six inches beyond the right side of the vehicle (not including some safety equipment and other equipment), or more than three feet forward of the front of the vehicle without a permit. Certain exceptions to the vehicle size restrictions apply.

Weight limits depend on a number of factors, including the type of highway, the number and configuration of axles on a vehicle, the type of cargo, the time of year, and other factors. Vehicles must comply with both the gross vehicle weight requirements and individual weight requirements for particular axles or wheels.

A single trip, consecutive month, or annual permit may be available for a vehicle that exceeds statutory weight limits. Permits may not be issued if a load can be divided or reduced to comply with statutory limits.

Vehicles carrying cargo like certain raw forest products are allowed to carry additional weight in winter, without a permit, when roads are frozen and damage to roads is less likely. DOT makes a “frozen road declaration” triggering these increased limits for highways under its jurisdiction. This declaration usually extends from approximately mid-December until late February or early March. The frozen road declarations for county highways and other local highways are made by local maintenance authorities.

Conversely, the travel of vehicles under overweight permits is restricted during spring thaw due to the unstable condition of a roadway during this period, and allowed vehicle weight may also be restricted for other special or temporary conditions. Special weight limits can also be established for particular bridges and culverts.

A memorandum written by Legislative Council staff prior to the 2007 Legislative Session summarizing laws on weight limits can be found at:  
[http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/committees/study/2006/HWY/files/memo1\\_hwy.pdf](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/committees/study/2006/HWY/files/memo1_hwy.pdf).

For more information on oversize/overweight permits, see the DOT website at:  
<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/business/carriers/osowgeneral.htm>.

For more information on seasonal weight limits, see the DOT website at:  
<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/business/carriers/seasonal.htm>.

**Vehicle  
Emissions  
Testing**

As part of the plan to bring the southeastern part of the state into compliance with the federal Clean Air Act, Wisconsin has a free vehicle emission inspection and maintenance program in Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Washington, and Waukesha Counties. The purpose of this program is to find vehicles with excessive exhaust emissions and require repairs to those vehicles so that they will comply with reasonable emission standards. DOT administers this program

through a private contractor and DNR sets the emission standards with which vehicles must comply.

Testing is generally required every two years, beginning in the third year following the vehicle's model year, on cars and trucks model year 1996 and newer that are less than 8,501 pounds (gross vehicle weight). Testing is also required upon initial registration of a vehicle by a new owner for vehicles more than five model years old. DOT sends notice to a vehicle owner when an inspection is required. Diesel-powered vehicles and motorcycles are exempt. Vehicles that do not pass inspection may not be registered until they are in compliance. As of July 1, 2008, tailpipe testing and gas cap testing are no longer used.

For more information on this program, see the DNR website at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/air/mobile/im240.htm>, or the DOT website at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/vehicles/im.htm>.

## Vehicle Insurance

Wisconsin law generally does not require drivers to carry motor vehicle insurance. However, vehicles operated for certain purposes may be required to be insured, including carriers of passengers or property for-hire, rental companies, certain buses, human service vehicles, and others.

Also, drivers who have been found to be responsible for a motor vehicle accident for which they carry no motor vehicle liability insurance may be required to prove financial responsibility before they are authorized to continue driving. Drivers may also be required to show proof of insurance to obtain an occupational license or to reinstate a driver license after operating privileges or vehicle registration has been revoked for certain reasons. An "SR-22" form is used to show proof of insurance.

For more information about proof of insurance requirements, see the DOT website at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/drivers/apply/doc/proof-of-ins.htm>.

For more information about Wisconsin's financial responsibility law for motor vehicle accidents, see: [http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/publications/im/im\\_2007\\_01.pdf](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/publications/im/im_2007_01.pdf).

## Highways

### State Trunk Highway Program

Jurisdiction over highways in Wisconsin is shared by the state, counties, cities, villages, and towns. The state has jurisdiction over major highways that function as corridors for interstate and inter-regional travel, called the state trunk highway system. DOT is responsible for the construction, improvement, and maintenance of the state trunk highway system and for improvement on connecting highways under local jurisdiction. For maps of the state trunk highway system, see the following DOT website: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/travel/maps/sth.htm>.

For detailed information on the state trunk highway system, including the structure and scope of the program, its administration by DOT, a description of the main program components, and information on program financing, see the following Informational Paper prepared by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/Informationalpapers/42.pdf>.

### County and Local Highways

According to this Informational Paper, counties and other local governments share responsibility for the remainder of the highways in Wisconsin, including highways that serve intra-regional traffic purposes, residential municipal streets, and town roads, and may share responsibility with the state for connecting highways. For information about local transportation assistance programs, see the DOT website at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/> and the following Informational Paper pre-

pared by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau:

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/Informationalpapers/43.pdf>.

## Transit

There are two classifications of transit systems in Wisconsin, defined by the type of service they operate and to whom the service is available.

First, public transit systems have regular operating schedules and established fares and are available to anyone who chooses to use the service. Currently, public transit is available in 54 of our 72 counties and in five reservations. Most public transit systems in Wisconsin primarily serve a single municipality, although some serve a broader region.

Second, specialized transportation services are available for use by specific groups (e.g., the elderly or persons with disabilities) and usually are limited to certain times, trip purposes, or locations.

Both public transit systems and specialized transit services are supported by a combination of local, state, and federal funds. DOT oversees the administration of over \$175 million in state and federal aid for public and specialized transit services. DOT also administers and awards three competitive federal grant programs, which provide additional federal funds to Wisconsin to address the transit needs of low-income workers, disabled riders, and communities with limited local funding for transit.

For more information about transit in Wisconsin, see the DOT's website at:

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/travel/transit/> and

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/transit/specialized.htm>.

## Other Modes of Transportation

Although motor vehicle travel on highways is the focus of this chapter, there are other modes of transportation in which the state plays a role. For more information on aeronautics, see [ch. 114, Stats.](#), or see the DOT website at:

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/business/engrserv/airports/getting-to-know-us.htm>.

For more information on railroads, see the DOT website at:

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/modes/rail.htm>, or see the website for the Office of the Commissioner of Railroads at: <http://ocr.wi.gov/>.

For information about recreational transportation by water see the DNR website at:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/enforcement/safety/boatsaf.htm> and for information about freight transportation by water, see the DOT website at:

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/modes/waterways.htm>.

For information about bicycling in Wisconsin, see the DOT website at:

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/modes/bicycles.htm>.

## Additional References

1. For information on transportation finance prepared by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, see: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/Informationalpapers/40.pdf>. For information on Wisconsin's motor vehicle fuel tax, see: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/Informationalpapers/41.pdf>.
2. For more information and statistics related to transportation funding in Wisconsin and the DOT budget, see: <http://www.dot.state.wi.us/about/budget.htm>.
3. To view other topics on DOT's "quick facts and statistics" page, go to: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/library/services/ref/quick.htm>.
4. For other publications that describe programs and services under the jurisdiction of the DOT, see: <http://www.dot.state.wi.us/siteindex/index.htm>.
5. For a list of DOT Service Centers, see: <http://www.dot.state.wi.us/about/locate/dmv/scmap.htm>.
6. For information about Wisconsin's diesel truck idling reduction grant program see: [http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/publications/im/im\\_2005\\_02.pdf](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/publications/im/im_2005_02.pdf).
7. The ***State of Wisconsin Blue Book*** contains information regarding our state government in Wisconsin, including DOT. The *Blue Book* is compiled by the Legislative Reference Bureau and published in odd-numbered years.

## Wisconsin Legislative Council

One East Main Street  
Suite 401  
Madison, WI 53703-3382

Phone: (608) 266-1304  
Fax: (608) 266-3830

[www.legis.state.wi.us/lc](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc)